DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 335 306 SP 033 123

AUTHOR O'Laughlin, Michael
TITLE Undergraduate and Graduate Student Teachers' Developing Understandings of Teaching and Learning: Report of a One-Year Journal Study and Follow-Up Interviews.
PUB DATE Apr 91
NOTE 45p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, April 3-7, 1991).
PUB TYPE Reports - General (140) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Beliefs; Case Studies; Elementary Education; *Epistemology; Experiential Learning; Higher Education; *Instruction; *Preservice Teacher Education; Research Design; *Research Methodology; Schools of Education; Self Efficacy; Student Experience; Student Teaching; *Teacher Education Programs
IDENTIFIERS Hofstra University NY; *Research in Progress

ABSTRACT

This study of student teachers' beliefs was conducted to track changes in their beliefs about teaching and examine the role of academic and practical experiences in modifying these beliefs. The primary focus of this paper is the evolution of methodology, with extracts from three case studies presented to illustrate the direction the research is taking. The research design includes both journal keeping by the students and narrative interviews on conceptions of epistemology, agency, and pedagogy. (A pilot draft of the interview protocal is included: it contains 34 questions asked of all students, a space for questions on specific themes that emerge from students' journals, and 2 questions on final thoughts.) Preliminary conclusions suggest that teacher beliefs do not exist as uniform ideological entities. Student teachers struggle with: their own histories and autobiographies; the ideal conception of pedagogy presented in their courses; adaptation or resistance to the powerful socialization pressures intrinsic to relationships with cooperating teachers; transformation in an education system locked into reproducing itself; and reconstruction of their own autobiographical and professional identities under all of these competing pressures and expectations. The conclusion is that no generic student teacher exists. (LL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED335306

Undergraduate and graduate student teachers' developing understandings of teaching and learning: Report of a one-year journal study and follow-up interviews

Michael O'Loughlin
Hofstra University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M. O'Loughlin

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SP 033 123

Paper presented as part of the Symposium Evolving beliefs about teaching: Contradictions and complexities of preparing to teach, J. Shulz, Chair, at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, April 4-7, 1991. Author's address: Dept. of Curriculum & Teaching, Hofstra University, Hempstead, N. Y. 11550. (516) 463 5792

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Acknowledgement

I wish to thank Dean Lois Beilin and Hofstra University School of Education for providing financial assistance to support this research. I also wish to thank Gina Rodolicco and Marta Serra for assistance in preparing the transcripts and assisting with the research described here. This article is dedicated to the nine student teachers who are particpating in this project for their outstanding professional commitment and dedication.

The project, of which my research is a part, began as a longitudinal study of student teachers' "beliefs." Our goal was to have students at three institutions maintain dialogical journals over a three- or four-year period so that we might track the changes that occurred in their beliefs about teaching, and what effects, if any, their academic and practical experiences in teacher education had in modifying these beliefs. Our hope was to be able to generate interinstitutional comparisons as well as comparisons between undergraduate and graduate students with respect to the kinds of changes that occurred in conceptions of teaching. In view of the problems that emerged we now know that our initial design was too ambitious, perhaps because we underestimated the complexity of the phenomenon we were investigating. However, since our research is essentially formative, we have had the flexibility to respond to changing circumstances as they occurred. In this paper I will describe how my research has evolved both in response to some unexpected difficulties that emerged, and in response to my own changing understanding of student teachers' emergent understandings. At this preliminary stage the primary focus of the paper will be on the methodology, with extracts from three case studies being presented to illustrate the direction which my research is taking.

Initial difficulties

The initial plan was for students to write dialogical journals to which each of us would respond at regular intervals. The nine students with whom I worked signed up because of a desire to have their voices heard; because of their desire to contribute to research; and because the project allowed additional possibilities for professional interaction and growth. The plan proved difficult to implement. In the first place my work tends to come in waves rather than in an even flow, and, as a result, I found it very difficult to respond to nine student journals with absolute regularity. Because of their workloads, many students also found it difficult to turn in journals regularly, though all of them were willing to save their journals and turn them in periodically. In addition, I found that when I gave students feedback, in the form of a letter which responded to

key points in their writing, most students failed to respond to this commentary in future journal entries. Part of the problem was that in all but two cases students were writing their journals for other classes and were only passing them to me after they had been returned by the course instructor. We had encouraged students to follow this procedure so that journaling for us would not be an added burden on the students. This created certain difficulties, one of which was that I became more of a spectator in their dialogue with the instructor rather than a true dialogue partner. The arrangement also created a significant time lag between the time journals were written and the time that they became available to me. Furthermore, much of the journaling was about local issues, specific to the content of the course for which it was being written. While some of the content revealed insights into students evolving understandings, much of it was too context-specific for my purposes. The end result was that student journals were turned in sporadically and I had very little personal contact with the students. I felt somewhat overwhelmed by the volume of paper, disconnected by the lack of connection with the students and discouraged by the lack of momentum in the project. I felt certain that the students must be experiencing similar feelings. To try to improve morale, and increase the regularity with which journals were turned in, my colleague Frances Rust - who was experiencing similar problems with her group - and I tried organizing a number of social gatherings, but, due to schedule conflicts and work commitments the attendance was invariably sparse. I was increasingly concerned about the possibility of students becoming alienated and dropping out of the project.

By the end of the first year I was faced with a large pile of student journals. As I read over the journals and tried to make sense of what the students were saying I ended up with more questions than answers. I regretted that the journals were not dialogical and I began to see that much of the material I had was too fragmented to comprise a set of genuine narratives. Instead, I began to see the journaling as providing the basis for the kind of conversation that would yield a narrative of students' experiences. I resolved to interview each of my students in depth. This was a fortuitous decision because the interviews not only yielded the narratives I sought, but the in-depth conversations I had with my students allowed me to rebuild the interpersonal connections both they and I needed to maintain the project's momentum.

Construction of the interview protocol

My initial impulse was to develop a specific interview for each student based on the issues raised in that student's journaling. It soon became apparent to me, however, that the journals had more in common than I had at first suspected. While students approached issues differently, all seemed to be struggling with the same core set of problems. Meanwhile my own understanding of the nature of teachers' understandings was evolving too, and so I decided to develop a common interview for all students, to be supplemented by a set of questions for each student inquiring into specific themes from that student's journal. Developing a common interview protocol has the significant advantage of allowing me to use students' responses in the current year as a metric against which inter- and intraindividual changes in the future can be assessed.

A number of considerations went into the construction of the interview protocol. In the first place I resolved that the interview would take the form of a narrative inquiry of the type described by Connelly and Clandinin (1990). Although my background is in the kind of stage-theory methodology pioneered by Piaget, Kohlberg, Perry and others (e.g., see Kuhn, Amsel & O'Loughlin, 1988), I had little interest in attempting to pigeon-hole my students' responses into specific stages reflecting relative sophistication in their understandings of pedagogy. Rather, I was interested in eliciting narratives that would allow me to develop an accurate representation of students' current constructions of reality. Therefore, I decided that the interview would be as open-ended as possible, with the emphasis on students telling their stories using their own metaphors and interpretive frameworks as far as possible.The end result was that most of the student interviews averaged three hours in length, usually distributed across two or three sessions. The interviews are currently being transcribed, and are typically about eighty double-spaced pages in length. As I begin to develop emerging interpretations of students' perspectives my goal is to validate these interpretations through periodic conferences and supplemental interviews so that the final descriptions will mirror students' own authentic interpretations of their experiences as

accurately as possible. I have also invited the students to collaborate with me in the analysis and write-up of the research. The transcription is still in progress and extracts from completed interviews will be used in the current paper more as an illustration of the potential of the methodology than as a preliminary reporting of research findings.

With respect to the content of the interview, this emerged, in part, from my reading of the students' journals, and, in part, from my own emerging understanding of the issues underlying teacher beliefs. For one thing, I have come to believe that the term "teacher belief" is misleading in that it captures only the surface of a much deeper ideological system. As I noted in a recent paper (O'Loughlin, 1991a), I have become increasingly convinced that the pedagogical beliefs student teachers espouse "are part of a deeply embedded, culturally formed epistemological system that is integral to their very identity , and that includes their sense of themselves as knowers as well as their attitudes towards authority" (1991a, ms., p. 2). Consequently, if we are to understand the nature of the pedagogical beliefs student teachers hold, and their prospects for change, it is essential that we inquire into the epistemological systems underlying these beliefs. Epistemology includes students' constructions of knowledge and authority. As Lyons (1990) notes, epistemological conceptions of knowledge can be investigated by inquiring into teachers conceptions of themselves as knowers; their conceptions of students as knowers; and their conceptions of curriculum either as received knowledge or as socially constructed knowledge. Teachers' conceptions of authority can be investigated by inquiring into their sense of agency or efficacy, as well as by inquiring into their construction of the teacher's role in terms of issues such as authority and control. Since information on these topics promises to provide an important interpretive referent against which student teachers' explicit pedagogical beliefs might be understood the interview is built around exploring these issues.

A second consideration that influenced the construction of the interview protocol was my increasing awareness of the role <u>contradiction</u> plays in thinking. The problem with the term "teacher belief" is that it brings to mind images of teachers subscribing consciously to cohesive, comprehensive ideologies about teaching, and being guided, in their practice, by these ideologies. If this is the case, we would expect to find increasing cohesion and certainty in teachers' views as they became increasingly

knowledgable about teaching. I have noted elsewhere (O'Loughlin, 1991b), for example, that this model of teacher belief appears to underlie the model of developmentally appropriate child-centered education proposed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 1988). Drawing both upon my own autobiographical experiences, and my conversations with students, I believe the reverse to be true, namely, that as one becomes increasingly reflexive about teaching one becomes increasingly aware of the essentially contradictory and dilemmatic nature of the demands of teaching. There is considerable support in the literature for the notion that teaching is much more the resolution of dilemmas than the unquestioning enactment of a single ideology, whether progressive or traditional (e.g., Berlak and Berlak, 1981; Billig et al, 1988; Delpit, 1988; Ginsburg, 1988; Lyons, 1990). Here , for example, is how, in a recent paper, I characterized some of the dilemmas progressive teachers face:

> Is it expedient, for example, for a teacher who believes in whole language to use basal readers if that is the norm in her school or school district? Ought a child-centered teacher give in to parents, administrators or others who demand that she adopt a more didactic teaching style and a skills-oriented curriculum? Can a humanitarian and democratic teacher accede to demands from school administrators to implement assertive discipline in her classroom? Can these issues be resolved by making pragmatic compromises? What is a teacher to do if the choice she is faced with truly violates her belief system? As Berlak and Berlak (1981) and Ginsburg (1988) point out in their discussion, questions such as these highlight the fundamental tension in society between education as a source of social reproduction, serving to <u>reproduce</u> social relations as they are, and education as a vehicle of <u>transformation</u> which enables people "to act individually and collectively to expose, challenge and transform unequal and contradictory class, gender and race relations" (Ginsburg, 1988, p. 17). As attractive as this latter formulation is, however, it, too may present us with deceptively simple choices. Consider how complex the debate has become, for example, since Delpit (1986, 1988) raised the issue of the necessity of teaching basic skills to poor children and children of color to ensure that they can succeed

> "in the white man's world." Do those of us who are in "the culture of power" have the right to speak for those who are excluded from power? Is it ethically and morally appropriate for us to tell members of disenfranchised groups what is good for them? Who knows what is best for them? Are we morally justified in reproducing the status quo (e.g., preparing students to fit it to society) if that is what they think they want, or do we have an ethical obligation to problematize societal structures so that our students might ultimately become more free? Why do so many progressives feel uncomfortable when Delpit raises questions such as these? In confronting these dilemmas must we make an either-or choice or is compromise legitimate? ...This, then is the stuff of which dilemmas are composed (O'Loughlin, 1991b, pp. 30-31).

In studying teachers' ideological systems, therefore, it would appear essential to gain an understanding of the kinds of issues student teachers perceive as dilemmatic or contradictory, and the kinds of resolutions they propose to address these dilemmas. Inquiry into issues of dilemma and contradiction was included in the interview to address this.

Finally, since student teachers' understandings develop in the contexts of specific teacher education programs, it seemed particularly important to examine the evolution of their views in interaction with these contexts. No attempt was made to study the organizational characteristics of the program provided by the School of Education through its provision of academic and field experiences leading to teacher certifiation. However, the interview included a component designed to assess how the students viewed the program and what effect the epistemological mesages of the program had on their own evolving understandings.

Description of the interview protocol

The interview design owes much to earlier work by Berlak and Berlak (1981) and Ginsburg (1988), in terms of both the content and the types of questions that were used to elicit students' understandings. The interview itself consists of thirty six

questions, not including the specific follow-up questions which were used to pursue themes from individual student journals. The interview begins with two questions [Q.1-2] that are designed to probe the origins of students' interest in teaching. This part of the interview is quite superficial, and I am planning another study in which detailed attention will be given to the autobiographical origins of students conceptions of epistemology, agency and pedagogy. In Section II students general epistemological conceptions of curriculum and pedagogy are explored. This section opens with two general questions and then, using a questioning technique borrowed from Ginsburg (1988), students views are explored through a discussion of actual and ideal teaching experiences [Q.3-6]. The next portion of the interview [Section III & IV - Q.7-17] inquires into students' general understandings of the nature of knowledge, and their interpretation of the epistemological messages that they are receiving from academic and field-based courses. An additional focus of these questions is on the relative presence or absence of consistency in the epistemological messages students are receiving, and the manner in which they cope with the inevitable mixed messages that they encounter. Section V [Q.18-23] continues the inquiry into students' epistemological conceptions of knowledge, but here, drawing on Berlak and Berlak (1981) and Ginsburg (1988) the focus is particularly on their conceptions of curriculum and the degree to which they are aware of the possibility of knowledge as a social construction. Students' awareness of and responsiveness to contradiction are expolored in Section VI [Q.24-25], and issues of empowerment, authority and agency are explored in Section VII [Q.26-32]. Question 33, inquiring into students' conceptions of multiculturalism was included to gauge student awareness and understanding of this issue since the university is located adjacent to a large multiethnic metropolitan area in a state that is preparing to mandate "a curriculum of inclusion." Finally, the interview concludes with open-ended questions and inquiry into specific themes from individual students' journals. The complete text of the interview is presented below:

Pilot draft of narrative interview on conceptions of epistemology, agency and pedagogy

Michael O'Loughlin
Hofstra University
September 1990

Introduction

In this interview I would like to explore

* your current views of teaching and learning;
* your perceptions of the degree to which the academic courses and field experiences provided by Hofstra have assisted you in becoming the teacher you want to be;
* your sense of what kind of teacher you want to be and the contradictions and challenges you wrestle with
* some specific issues and themes from your journal that intrigued me and that I would like to hear you discuss further.

I. Biography

1. Before we begin perhaps you could refresh my memory as to why you originally decided to become a teacher?

2. Do you still feel that same motivation, or what are your current reasons for wishing to teach?

II. Epistemological conceptions of curriculum & pedagogy

3. What do you see as a teacher's primary purpose?

4. What abilities and skills do you think a teacher needs to be successful?

A. ACTUAL EXPERIENCE

5. I'd like you to think about an occasion recently when you've had an opportunity to teach, e.g., during student teaching or participant/ observation in school. . .

CURRICULUM

* What was the purpose of the lesson?
* How did you go about deciding what specific content to teach?
* What sources did you consult in making the decisions about content?
* What other factors did you consider in deciding what specific content to teach?

PEDAGOGY

* How did you actually teach the lesson?
* Why did you decide to choose this teaching approach?
* What sources did you consult while planning how to teach the lesson?
* Were there any other factors that went into your decision to choose this teaching approach?
* How successful was this lesson, in your opinion?

B. IMAGINED EXPERIENCE

6. I'd like you to speculate now about a situation in the near future when you will be employed as an elementary teacher, and tell me how you think you will go about teaching two specific lessons. Thinking about the basic elementary school subjects [reading, writing, math, science, social studies, language arts] which of these areas do you feel most comfortable with? Why? And which one do you feel least comfortable with? Why? I'd like to hear how you think you will go about teaching a specific content lesson in each of these two subjects.

6a. First, with respect to _____ [most comfortable subject]. . .

CURRICULUM

* What will be the purpose of the lesson?
* How will you go about deciding what specific content to teach?
* What sources will you consult in making the decisions about content?
* What other factors will you consider in deciding what specific content to teach?

PEDAGOGY

* How will you actually teach the lesson?
* Why will you choose this teaching approach?
* What sources will you consult while planning how to teach the lesson?
* What other factors will go into your decision to choose this teaching approach?
* How will you measure the success of this lesson?

6b. Now, with respect to _____ [least comfortable subject]. . .

CURRICULUM

* What will be the purpose of the lesson?
* How will you go about deciding what specific content to teach?
* What sources will you consult in making the decisions about content?
* What other factors will you consider in deciding what specific content to teach?

PEDAGOGY

* How will you actually teach the lesson?
* Why will you choose this teaching approach?
* What sources will you consult while planning how to teach the lesson?
* What other factors will go into your decision to choose this teaching approach?
* How will you measure the success of this lesson?

III. Epistemological messages from university's academic courses

7. How many education courses have you now completed? What methods courses have you had? Have you completed student teaching? If not... when do you expect to complete student teaching?

CONSISTENCY OF EPISTEMOLOGY IN THEORY COURSES?

8. Was there one central theme or message that you noticed running through your education courses? If yes.. what exactly was this theme? If no ... what contradictions and conflicts did you observe, and how did you handle these?

9. Was there one common approach to teaching used by professors in most or all of your education courses? If yes... how would you describe this approach, and what is your opinion of it? If no... what different approaches were used, and what is your opinion of each?
Did the teaching approach practised by professors generally model the teaching approaches that they advocated that you should use? In other words, did you feel that they generally practised what they preached?

RELEVANCE OF BIOGRAPHY & CONSTRUCTION?

10. To what extent did you receive the message in your academic courses that your own experiences and opinions counted, and that you had the ability to construct your own knowledge and understanding? Can you give an example of when this happened, and how you felt? Can you give an example of when this did not happen, and how you felt about that?

11. What is your overall sense of what your education courses were trying to accomplish? How well do you feel they succeeded in your case? If you were to recommend changes, what would you suggest?

IV. Epistemological messages from university's field experiences

12. How many field experience placements have you had? In what settings have you been placed? Were any of these by your choice... or against your wishes?

CONSISTENCY OF EPISTEMOLOGY IN FIEID EXPERIENCES?

13. Was there one central theme or message that was emphasized by field experience supervisors and cooperating teachers? If yes... what exactly was this theme? If no ... what contradictions and conflicts did you observe between the demands and statements of supervisors and cooperating teachers, and how did you handle these?

14. Was there one common approach to teaching advocated by cooperating teachers and field supervisors during all of your field experiences? If yes... how would you describe this approach, and what is your opinion of it? If no... what different approaches were used, and what is your opinion of each? How did you handle the conflicting messages?

15. What is your overall sense of what the field experiences were trying to do? How well do you feel they succeeded in your case? If you were to recommend changes, what would you suggest?

ASSESSEMNT OF OVERALL EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONSISTENCY ACROSS SCHOOL OF EDUCATION COURSES

16. If you were to describe what Hofstra School of Education overall stands for what would you say? Do you feel there is agreement among the faculty as to what a graduating Hofstra teacher should be? If yes... what do you think are the characteristics we all agree are important in a teacher. If not... which parts of our program articulate a common vision, and which parts stand out as being in disagreement?

17. Considering the courses that you took that focused on theory, the courses you took that focused on practice, and the practical experience you gained in your field experience, which do you believe was of greatest benefit to you as a beginning teacher? Why?

V. Epistemological understanding of curriculum & pedagogy

KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTED OR ACCUMULATED?

18. What kind of learning do you feel you need to do in order to become a teacher? What kinds of educational experiences are most beneficial in learning to be a teacher? What kinds of experience have you found least helpful?

KNOWLEDGE & CURRICULUM AS GIVEN OR PROBLEMATIC?

19. What kind of learning do children need to do in order to benefit from schooling? Is it the same in every subject, or does it vary from one subject to another? In other words, are there some subjects that seem to call primarily for thinking and understanding, while there are others where the emphasis needs to be much more on mastery and retention of basic factual information? If difference acknowledged, probe for which subjects and why.

20. When you think of the term elementary school curriculum what comes to mind? Of what should an elementary school curriculum consist? Who decides what the curriculum will be? In whose interest?

21. Are you familiar with published curricula, the kind that typically come with a teacher's edition, a resource book, a reader and a workbook? What is your opinion of this approach to curriculum? Are they appropriate in all subjects, in some subjects, or not at all appropriate? If seen as appropriate, probe for which subjects and why. If not seen as appropriate, probe why not. With published curricula, who defines curriculum? In whose interest?

22. What is the teacher's responsibility with regard to curriculum? If necessary probe... How do children's lives and interests get taken into account?

KNOWLEDGE AS MOLECULAR vs HOLISTIC

23. Publishers typically present a separate curriculum for each subject area? What is your opinion of that practice? Would it be desirable to integrate instruction across subject areas? Why? How might you do this in your classroom?

VI. Awareness of and responsiveness to contradiction

24. Sometimes educators offer conflicting or contradictory advice as to how to deal with a particular problem. A professor may say to use one approach, for example, and a cooperating teacher may advise the opposite. Have you encountered such situations? Could you give me an example? How did you decide what to do? What sources of knowledge did you rely on? How comfortable do you feel with your solution? [Note, if first example presented was resolved probe for a second example in which the interviewee has not yet reached resolution, or vice versa]. Now, I'd like one more example. This time I'd like you to tell me of a similar dilemma you faced which you resolved successfully/ have not yet resolved.

25. Here is a list of some of the dilemmas and contradictions students often wrestle with. [Present list]. For each one I'd like to know briefly if this is something you have recently given thought to, and if you have, what your current view is:

A Can I "cover" the material required by the syllabus, yet build curriculum that is based on students' needs and interests?

B Can I have a "democratic" and open classroom if I and my students know that I have total authority over all decisions that are made?

C Can I foster self-discipline without losing control in the classroom?

D Can I teach whole language, writing process etc. and also "cover" the basic skills?

D Can I tell students they are there only for learning, when they and I know that I assign grades and judge their work?

E Can I be sure I'm teaching the "right things' unless I use curriculum guides and "teachers' editions""

F Can I enable children to think for themselves, yet also prepare them to succeed on standardized tests?

G Can I avoid "teaching for the test"?

H Can learning always be intrinsically interesting, or are extrinsic rewards such as stars and stickers OK when students simply have to memorize basic information?

I If I teach transformatively or constructively, can I be sure children will learn the basics too?

J Mustn't there be a "happy medium" somewhere between traditional, didactic teaching and completely open approaches?

K If I avoid grouping children by ability, say for reading instruction, won't this hold back the brighter students?

L It's fine to say that we should educate children trasnformatively, but don't we have ther responsibility of preparing our students to fit into society?

M Ideals are fine but if I am to be hired and to be successful, mustn't I be realistic?

VII. Conceptions of authority and personal agency

26. Have you heard the expression <u>teacher empowerment</u>? What does it mean to you? [If not familiar...teacher empowerment captures the notion that teachers should have freedom to make decisions about what and how they teach consistent with the children's welfare and their own goals]. How do you feel about this? Do you feel empowered to make a difference in children's lives, or

do you sense a lot of obstacles that might prevent you? If empowered... what kind of difference, exactly, do you want to make? Why? If sensitive to obstacles..... What are your biggest concerns in this area? Do you have any sense of how you might overcome these obstacles?

27. One of my students, currently a teacher, recently said: "To get hired and to get tenure you have to play the game." Do you agree? If yes.... in what ways do you think you might have to conform to others' dictates? If no..... Are there likely to be any limits on your freedom to exercise your professional judgment? How will you deal with these?

28. Which of the following sources of authority and control concern you most?:
* state and district testing mandates
* state and district curriculum guidelines
* district evaluation system for new teachers
* supervision from principal
* pressure for achievement from parents and community

How do you hink you will handle these pressures?

29. Can you describe an occasion in college or in your field experiences in which you voiced an objection or disagreement to someone in authority, such as for instance if you felt silenced; if you felt your needs were not being considered; or if you felt that something objectionable was occurring? What was the result of your protest? Can you describe a similar occasion in which you might have spoken out and chose to remain silent? Why did you make that decision? What effect did this have on you? Overall, which pattern is more typical of your approach to dealing with conflict with authorities?

30. I'd like you to speculate now about a situation in the near future when you will be employed as an elementary school teacher. Can you give me a concrete example of a situation in which you might insist on standing up to an authority? What factors might influence you to take a stand over this issue? Can you give me an example of a situation in which you think you might choose to remain silent? What factors would lead you to choose this course of action? What would have to change before you would resist in this situation?

31. Did you receive one common message from faculty members, supervisors and cooperating teachers about whether you should resist or conform to the status quo in schools? If yes... what was that message, and how was it presented to you? If conflicting messages presented... What messages did you hear, and in what form were they presented? Which one influenced you most? Why?

32. Many beginning teachers worry a lot about the issue of classroom control. Is this an issue of concern for you? What precisely is your concern? Did you receive

one common message from faculty members, supervisors and cooperating teachers about this issue? If yes... what was that message, and how was it presented to you? If conflicting messages presented... What messages did you hear, and in what form were they presented? Which one influenced you most? Why? What do you believe the purpose of school ought to be with respect to classroom discipline.

VIII. Multiculturalism, inclusion and other themes

33. Have you heard of the term "multicultural education"? What does it mean to you? What do you thinks schools ought to be doing in this area, and why?

Should multicultural education address issues of racism? In what way? Is there a need for anti-racist educaiton? How would you engage issues of racism if you worked in an all-white school? Would you use the same techniques in amulti-ethnic school? How about if you workedin an all-Black school?

Are you aware of N.Y. State's plans to mandate a "curriculum of inclusion"? What do you think of this?

To what extent have you been made aware of issues of multiculturalism and racism during your program here at Hofstra? Were these issues discussed during your academic program? How often were you placed in multiethnic settings? Was this your preference? How would yoiu assess our commitment to multiculturalism? What are we trying to accomplish?

34. Are there any issues we haven't covered that are important to you?

IX. Followup questions on specific themes that emerge from ongoing journal narratives

* Specific questions and themes to be drawn from individuals' journals.

X. Conclusion

35. Are there any final thoughts you would like to convey to people such as my colleagues and I who are involved in the preparation of future teachers?

36. What are your feelings right now as you look forward to a career in teaching?

******

Illustrative case studies of student teachers' understandings of epistemology and pedagogy

As I noted earlier, it would be premature to present findings from this research since transcription is still in progress and since the interpretations will be done collaboratively with the students who participated in the research. However, extracts from some completed transcripts will be presented with brief commentary to illustrate the kinds of epistemological understandings different students hold, and the manner in whihc they are constructing conceptions of pedagogy.

Case study #1: Velda

Velda, who is of African-American descent, is a graduate student in elementary education who completed all of the requirements for graduation as of December 1990. She is a prolific writer and, in addition to the journaling she is doing for me, is actively writing a novel and children's stories. Velda has written exclusively for me for the past eighteen months and her journal is characterized by concerns that are quite atypical. In my summary notes on her first year of journaling I identified five recurrent themes in her journal. First, there is idealism: "I have only recently come to accept myself as the diehard idealist that I am. I've been fighting it all my life and have finally decided to stop because that's the way I need to be." Second, Velda displays a deep social consciousness and sense of mission, particularly tied to issues of oppression and racism in society. She wrote at one point about the hopelessness she sees in the faces of so many Black children, and she has repeatedly mentioned her desire to "fight for the rights of children as human beings." Third, and intertwined with the foregoing, is a deep sense of empowerment, and a sense of the potential of education as an empowering force: "In my practice I like to explore the ideal with children so that they get a sense of thinking about how to change what they feel needs to be changed. I want to believe that by the time they are older they'll be empowered enough to change...." Regarding teacher empowerment, Velda comments "we, as professional educators, are being too passive... we say we want to provide purpose and meaning for our students. Yet we

won't even stand up for our own purpose and meaning." Velda is also very conscious of her own ethnic identity and how that influences the roles made available to her by others; "I don't want to be viewed (even though I will) as a Black teacher." Finally, Velda's journal reveals a significant degreee of political consciousness: "All of the important things - self-esteem, confidence, voice, competence - that need to come from within the self are deteriorating [in the Black community] due to our lack of finding effective ways to obtain representative power." As might be expected, Velda's construction of pedagogy is very deeply interrelated with her explicit philosophy of life.

At the beginning of the interview [Q1-2] Velda again affirmed that concerns about justice for children underlie her interest in teaching. In response to Q4 [Skills a teacher needs] she stated that a teacher needs to be "super conscious and aware of herself and her language and the environment that she sets up to teach in and secondly she needs to be very conscious and aware of and very sensitive to the children's voices and the children's needs so she can shape her curriculum around that." When asked to describe a lesson that she had taught during student teaching [Q5], Velda chose to describe a "lesson on order in the school." Her ultimate goal was to teach these kindergarten children about alphabetical and numerical order, but she was less interested in teaching them the mechanics than the underlying concepts:

> I wanted to do a combination of what people were expecting me to be teaching and a combination of what I felt like I wanted to be teaching... well, for instance they want children to be able to know their numbers and their ABCs and all that's [for] them. I could care less if a five-year old knows their ABCs or not but I just use that as a way to satisfy them [supervisors], and to open me up to the real meaning of what I wanted to be doing with them [students], the concept of order.

The springboard for the way Velda taught the lesson came form a negative reaction to how her cousin taught alphabetical order using a ditto sheet. Velda then described how her lesson was conducted:

> Well, the classroom was set up in a very cooperative style, it wasn't a struggle. . . and I decided to do it just after lunch because I realized how chaotic lunch time is with the children and so when they came in I asked them how was lunch... and

> the children, of course, used the word chaos because they like that word. It is a new word for them and they like it... so we branched on to what chaotic was and then we branched on to, I put words on the board and I asked them to. . . what comes to their mind when they hear the word chaotic and and they made suggestions, and we put everyone's suggestions down and we we compared it to order and we started to talk about things in the classroom that were ordered and that led to numerical order, and size order, and alphabetical order,

Velda then went on to present photographs of a traditonal classroom set-up, and a more child-centered and collaborative classroom environment, and they discussed the relative degrees of order in both, and the merits of each kind of social arrangement. In terms of evaluating the success of the lesson, Velda said that her primary criterion is student response, and that in this case the students "certainly enjoyed it and afterwards they seemed to have a good idea of what chaos versus order was." When asked to discuss her ideal lesson [Q6} Velda used this as an opportunity to elaborate some more on her understanding of teaching. She said that there was no subject that she woudl feel uncomfortable teaching, and in the course of conversation she indicated that her approach to curriculum is to build it around the needs of the specific children in the classroom, and to work back from concepts to specific instructional plans:

> Overall I just want to be with a group of kids, my own group of kids for a long period of time, long term goals. I have no big thrills about what I do with them from day to day... you need the children in order to think about what you are doing with them, you need them there [so you wouldn't just think curriculum then?] No, only [time] when I think curriculum is [when] I feel like it is demanded of me and when I feel like something occurs to me, a point I want to make with my children or something I want to expose them to, I think curriculum because I am working hard at finding ways to fit what I want into the curriculum... but mostly I think concepts [concepts?] ideas, ideas [and what's your next step?] my next step from there is deciding exactly what I want my children to get out of it. I went backwards. I start with my goal and work up from there and then I look for things to pull in."

Velda admits that during student teaching, when she did not have her own classroom, she often had to camouflage her real purpose because otherwise "it doesn't look like

teaching."

One of the most problematic aspects of teacher education, for many students, is the relationship between the academic program and the field experiences. Velda's experiences are instructive. She reports that she had one cooperating teacher "who was really helping me to become my own teacher", but that the other teacher she was assigned to was very concerned about coaching her into how to fit into the school system:

> It wasn't a whole lot of direct pressure, it was more "sure, do whatever you want" but... for the future she was giving advice... "the first year the students are like this, exactly like this, this is exactly what everyone else is doing...because you don't want to make waves because you don't have tenure" [how did you respond to that teacher?] I congratulated her and I disagreed with her for a long time because she has been waiting in the wings for this tenure thing for a few years and I congratulated her on still having a decent philosophy intact and not giving up on the issues. That was good to see because she was still slipping in her own stuff - she still has the ideas intact and she is ready to move as soon as she has tenure. But the idea of not making waves, [waiting] until tenured in order to make waves, I disagreed with. First I had to clarify what making waves meant. I asked her if you could make suggestions or voice your opinion. She said no, oh no, it meant to go along with whatever is happening until you get tenure and I told her that that sounded very sad to me and I was really disappointed in the lack of empowerment among the teachers and I think... [how did she respond? Was she defensive?] Well I wouldn't say defensive, it was more like empathic - she sees me getting fired already from whatever job I get... she seemed frightened for me."

In my experience with students I have found these socialization pressures to be endemic to student teacher-cooperating teacher relationships. It will be instructive to see how less empowered students than Velda handle such encounters.

With respect to her ability to deal with contradictory messages [Q24], Velda reports that she got all of the following messages during her teacher education experience: "I got (1) complete structure; (2) close your door and do whatever you want

to do; and I got (3) here is a way to integrate what they want you to do and what you want to do; and I got (4) don't make waves." How did Velda respond to these mixed and contradictory messages?: "Well, some things I am learning to bend on a little bit, and some things I won't move on at all. Some things I won't compromise [How do you decide?] Well, I start at the top of my priority Ilist and work my way down. I won't compromise on the children's enjoyment of activities. I won't compromise. I will compromise a little on content because I don't think that is super duper important... And I won't compromise on what is developmentally appropriate for children." Velda had an atypical reaction to the list of oppositions presented in Q25. She was amused at the list and had difficulty taking it seriously. She already had worked out a larger, more overarching philosophy, and found the dichotomies presented to be artifical and trivial.

An undercurrent that runs through Velda's entire narrative is her sense of mission. Velda repeatedly states that she wants to work in the interest of rights and justice for children. She wants chidlren to be able to think about what goes on in society critically, and that they "be risky enough to do something about it - active conscious people." Because of this, despite her explicit recognition of the progressive, child-centered thrust of the teacher education program, she is frustrated at the lack of activism in the messages she received: [Responding to Q31] "I never really got the message to actually go take a stand. It was more like... try to find a way to fit your ideas into what is going on - nothing about taking a stand [The best you got was to be subversive and go around the system rather than confront it?] exactly."

With respect to multiculturalism [Q33}, Velda was very familiar with the issues. She explained that the essential idea of multiculturalism is inclusion, and she pointed out that multicultural education must necessarily be anti-racist too. She is critical of the notion of mulitculturalism as another add-on to the curriculum:

> I think a lot of people are regarding it as another subject to be taught... a lot of places now think they do multicultural education. It is like a unit that lasts for two weeks and they read books from different cultures and that is what they call multicultural educaiton."

She is critical of the fragmentation and tokenism that accompanies events such as Black History Month and the King holiday in so many schools, and she points out that,

for her, dealing with issues of race and color is unavoidable. In her journal she recounts her conclusions at the end of a conversation with her all-white nursery school students: "As I expected, their ideas reflected exactly what our society has taught them - skin color determines race... they also believed black people had once been white." And later, discussing her role as a Black teacher in a white culture:

> No, I definitely don't want to be the white teacher [but] ... being the only black teacher would be sort of a struggle although I could deal with that as long as I wasn't viewed as a... the token black teacher you know, and I don't get the sense from where I have been so far out here [i.e., suburbs] that I would be viewed as the token black teacher. I really get the sense that they would view me as just another professional in the field although there is a tendency to - especially in the schools where there are few black teachers and a large proportion of black students - that they are more likely to stack your classes with the discipline problems because they feel like you will be able to handle it better or something"

Velda's narrative is striking for the sense of mission that emerges repeatedly as an underlying theme. I made an attempt to probe the origins of this sense of mission at the conclusion of the interview: I began by asking her to respond to quotes from her journal that indicated this sense of mission:

> This is who I am and this is one of my chief concerns, and I am definitely on a mission [and this is rooted in your own history?] right, it has nothing to do with school, college. [How do you account for your degree of awareness relative to your peers here at Hofstra... Where does the concern come from?] It came from me probably being such an idealistic child. I never lost it. I spent my whole personal life striving for the ideal situation in everything if I felt things could be better

Velda then goes on to narrate experiences from her childhood that marked the early emergence of idealism, and she attributes her activist stance to a reaction against the passive stance her mother adopted in relation to the world.

Finally, Velda, who has since taken up a teaching position in a public school in an inner city urban area, was asked [Q36] how she feels as she looks forward to a

teaching career:

> Well, going into it I am already a little frustrated but anxious to get in and get moving on where I want to go with this mission, so, I am looking forward to it with alittle frustration. [Are you optimistic?] Oh, very [idealism and optimism are interrelated?] yeah, they are. One of my classmates said that to me today in class, but some of them say it in a complimentary way and some of them say it in that accusatory tone. It is funny, most of them think it is great that it's not them.

Case study #2: Pam

Pam is a graduate student in elementary education who has been a full-time homemaker for ten years, and she now works as an on-call susbtitute teacher while attending graduate school part-time. Pam's journal is distinctive for the intellectual excitement it conveys. At one point she says "I have grown so much intellectually in the past year. It is exciting and it is even more exciting to be reminded that this growth/ understanding will continue." Pam loves the excitement of learning for herself. She says "it took me until college to realize that I was a part of history", and at one point she expresses regret for the intellectual growth she may have missed out on while being a homemaker. With respect to pedagogy, Pam is developing what she describes in her journal as "a strong, child-centered philosophy of whole language." She embodies much of what the literature refers to as the notion of teacher as intellectual, as the following quotes from her journal suggest: "Can one be a third grade teacher, visionary, intellectual... It's interesting, I find myself grappling with issues over and over again - the same or similar issues presented from another vantage point... It takes a tremendous leap of faith to understand and really feel in your heart that children of all ages will find intellectual struggle invigorating and will in fact not become discipline problems. Also, it is the same leap of faith that children have a whole story to tell, each and every one of them." Yet, Pam has anxieties too, and these center particularly around the issue of empowerment. Pam confesses to "being very apprehensive about putting all this to work". Also, though she recognizes fully what is wrong with education, she has experienced real dififculty in understanding why it cannot readily be changed:

> Conventional education is upside down, pure and simple. Teaching should he "here is a problem, find your way", not "This is the way."... It still baffles me that so much has been known about how children learn for so long... yet so much bad education exists and so many bad university programs must exist to perpetuate it all, universities that turn out - intentionally - teachers who pour [i.e. knowledge into students' heads]. Why? Why? Why?

In her interview Pam begins by noting that she first decided to become a teacher "for routine reasons" but now she wants to "make a difference on a much larger scale." She believes that all children "are entitled to have doors open to them", and she sees her primary purpose [Q3] as "opening the children's eyes to learning", so that math, science and so on are seen as "something satisfying to delve into."With respect to Q5, Pam chose to describe a story reading session that she had done with first-graders. She recounted how she had selected a story that she thought would be interesting to the children, and how she had followed the reading with a set of open-ended questions. When asked to evaluate how well the lesson went, Pam remarked:

> Probably not as successful as I anticipated... it was very hard to do really good open-ended questions [why?] Well, I think we are locked into yes/no questions or questions [where] we are looking for one particular answer. I think it is just conditioning or something... So I think that was probably mostly it. I lost them with my questioning and they lost interest... they started misbehaving, you know poking and asking questions, like "can I get a drink?" - pretty clear indicator.

Asked which subject she felt most comfortable teaching, after some discussion Pam concluded that she feels equally comfortable with all curricular areas. For her ideal lesson [Q6] Pam described teaching a unit on measurement to first-graders using child-centered principles. She would divide the class into groups and have each group measure objects with nonstandard measures and then try to communicate the measurements to each other. As she notes, her goal is for children to arrive at their own understanding:

> We would in the mean time be measuring different units, paper clips and that kind of thing, and be discovering that a desk can be, you know, fifty paper clips

> long, or it can be three pencils long or two rulers long, whatever the purpose of the lesson would be, have them come to an understanding of why we have a standard unit of measure and then, after, hopefully we could arrive at that, then we, I could feel that I had accomplished the purpose for that lesson and it might not all occur in one lesson, it might occur over two different periods of time

Asked how she might evaluate the success of such a lesson, Pam revealed the struggle she's having with the issue of evaluation:

> That's a good question. That's always the question is how do you evaluate success... I suppose I would pose additional problems... different measuring problems... that would give me an idea of their understanding of measurement. I think it would be fairly obvious the ones who didn't understand it. [Would you test them in any way?] Oh gosh, that's where you come up against the brick wall. It really is [How do you define "brick wall"?] The brick wall is where the parents and the school want concrete... they want grades and that's the brick wall and I guess at some point you have to assign the evaulative number to the child [do you see any way around this brick wall?] I don't see it as immovable. I see now in our school [i.e., her children's school] they are doing progress reports for the first- and third- and report cards for the second- and fourth-grades but you still end up with the grade... I think that's one thing I hope to do with my classes, and whether I will or not - but I hope - one thing I hope to do with my classes is, if they are tested or evaluated in some way, is give them feedabck...

Many dilemmas such as this appear throughout Pam's narrative, and in each case possible resolution to the dilemma is interlinked with Pam's notion of empowerment, and most particularly in her "hope" that she will be given the opportunity to pursue her own preferred course of action.

Some interesting insight into Pam's own epistemological development came from her response to Q10 [opportunities for knowledge construction in her courses?]. Pam describes one experience that she refers to as a <u>revelation</u>:

> In one instance I had come to this real revelation about children's learning and it was through reading, through doing a particular asignment, reading a particular book. I was sort of led to that through a process of evaluating different

> readings... and so it was - bar none - it was just the most exciting thing [Asked what the revelation was, Pam explains that it pertained to the notion of children constructing their own understanding through process writing] ...It came from having the same thing happen to me in class. I was engaged in learning for myself. I would think in doing this, in realizing, you know, that I had some or a lot of input in it. It was just a very a very exciting thing and it made me... the experience of this class made me want to - I think I wrote this in my journal somewhere - it made me want my ten years back that I spent raising my kids

Turning to the issue of curriculum [Q20-21]Pam sees a role for the state and district in outlining curriculum requirements, but her ideal situation is "a school where the principal allows a lot of interpretation on the part of the teacher as to how the curriculum is implemented." Asked about standardized, prepackaged curricular materials, Pam remarked: "I don't think it's all bad. I think it can be helpful as a jumping off point", though she did express reservations that teachers "might use it as a recipe." Queried about the teacher's responsibility with respect to curriculum [Q22] Pam's ambivalence about the standard curriculum becomes more apparent::

> I think she has to interrupt it and make it in a more palpable form for her students. I think her job is as an interpreter [What do you mean by interpret?] She has to turn it back to the kids. She has to find ways to extract what is important in the lesson, and what goals should be in the lessons... and roll them out to the children in a way that will get them to that point, but in a way that will keep them interested, that will keep them active.

Asked about integration across the curriculum [Q23], Pam acknowledges not having given this subject much thought. She says she can see possibilities of integration using the standard curriculum, but again she is struggling:

> I can see teachers integrating a set curriculum, I've seen it in action... in the first grade I observed where this woman did a unit on Jack in the Beanstalk, where they read the story and they reenacted it and they planted beans and they watched them grow. They did "ea" words on a beanstalk - they each cut out their own little green leaves for the beanstalk and they did the "ea" words and I don't know where else she took it, but I can definitely see it. [Is it possible to do it

> using standard curriculum materials for each subject?] Probably not because I think you get so locked in. I mean it's really like a mind set.

With respect to contradiction, contrary to Velda's dismissal of the dichotomies, many of the issues represent real dilemmas for Pam. Some representative examples will be presented. For instance, in response to Q25A ["cover" the curriculum]. Pam says:

> I'm still struggling with this because it is such an overwhelming responsibility to be responsible for these little children and bringing them to be ready to move on to the next grade, and it's just hit me what a tremendous responsibility it is and what if... what if I don't cover everything.. but the other side of the thing, as one of the professors here said, is just because you cover doesn't mean the children learn and that is the flip side of the coin and that is definitely the dilemma... I am coming down on the children's side because I think I can work it out.

Pam also says that she struggles with issues of control [Q25C], and she regards the grading dilemma presented in Q25E as "tough, real tough". Regarding Q25F [curriculum guides], Pam explains "This is something I am still struggling with [what do you think you will do?] If I had these curriculum guides and teachers' editions I would just interpret them my way". Regarding teaching for the test [Q25F & G], Pam says that "just before they have standardized tests coming up I think you can review procedures for being a successful standardized test-taker." Regarding the issue of teaching directly to the test, empowement considerations again figure in her response:

> I think you can [avoid teaching for test] if you are strong. I think you need support [Are you strong enough to do that?] I hope so, but I don't know. You want to always wonder if you went into a school where a principal bucked you... it would be tough. It would really be tough.

Pam's response to Q25K [ability grouping] also reveals her struggles. She weighs the value of teaching literature and whole language against the likelihood that many children may have insufficient vocabulary to do the kind of independent reading that is required. She concludes: "I think I am still struggling with this one, I really am, because I see the kinds of vocabulary that are called on in some books. I'm really struggling with this one, maybe you can have whole language. I don't have an answer." Responding to Q25K ["happy medium], Pam reveals discomfort with the either-or

choices we were discussing:

> I don't see you have to shoot for a happy medium actually... I'm not sure it's an either-or thing. I don't think of it as an either- or question. I think that for someone who is really good...that the approaches will vary depending upon the class, and the approaches will vary depending upon the material, and I think I see it as more as... is the right word organic process? ... I don't see it in terms of either-or...

When the issue of empowerment was raised [Q26], Pam admitted that she had not really given this issue much thought. After I defined empowerment for her she commented:

> I would love to be able to do that, and maybe I will do that [You sound a bit cautious?] I am cautious because in a very safe environment like this one can say a lot of things, but when one's getting, when one is in not quite as safe an environment it is a lot harder [Do you feel empowered to make a difference in children's lives?] I think my ideas of teaching and the kind of teacher I see myself as being allows or makes room for a lot of growth on the part of students and the kind of growth where they won't feel that learning is boring and learning is sitting at a desk, but that they will feel and will make a real inroad in a lifelong... just loving learning and the challenge of learning.

Confronted with the "play the game" issue [Q27] Pam responded:

> That is really frightening to me because I see that everywhere. I see that in politics. I just see it everywhere. You have to play the game to get elected, but then do you sell yourself out?...I think... there is a fine line between selling yourself out and presenting yourself in such a way that will be appealing to the person. I think that will be a real art. [How might you have to conform to others' dictates?] I might have to do ability grouping because a lot of districts just have ability grouping, it's district policy from what I understand, and little children trot off to their different rooms for 40 minutes of reading and math and I'll probably... I'm sure I will have to compromise on that... I might also have to compromise on, gosh I hate to say this, I might have to compromise on the way I would teach math, which would really bug me. [what kind of compromise?] My sense of the

> compromise is that right now, from what I gather, math teaching is very definitely teacher standing up in front of the class, and worksheets and drilling practice [where did you get that impression?] from my own children's experience.

The issue of empowerment was probed further in Q29-30. When asked if she'd ever taken a stand Pam confessed that when silenced her typical pattern is to feel anger and withdraw rather than take a stand on her own behalf. Asked how she might deal with assertiveness in a school setting Pam offrered the following solution:

> In a way, if I am not given autonomy in the way I conduct my class I would have a tough time with that and I would stand up to authority and I would use whatever method I could think of to see that I could teach the way I wanted to teach [Can you give me an example of when you might choose silence?] Probably I would tend to remain a little more silent with a colleague, with other teachers. I know from my own experience in various organizations that newcomers are looked on I think sort of like being a junior senator your first year in the senate. You're supposed to sit quietly and listen from what I understand.... I would tend to be more of a listener and hopefully consider it a period of evolution in dealing with my colleagues [What would have to change before you would take a stand?] I think there would have to be a rapport and understanding of where the colleague is coming form, most importantly.

With respect to multiculturalism [Q33], Pam says that while she does not have a clear sense of the alternative at this time, she recognizes the absence of a multicultural perspective in the curriculum to be "a very significant problem." Her discussion revealed a familiarity with the Eurocentric bias of much of the curriculum and the need for other voices to be heard: "I have a real sense that while we are studying presidents and all that kind of stuff there was so much else going on and that is as much history as this is [does the social studies curriculum in textbooks reflect these other perspectives?] I don't think you can teach... I would have a tough time teaching social studies from publisher's textbooks."

I began the probe of Pam's own journaling by inquiring into the meaning behind the statement that it took her until college to realize that she was a part of history. She replied:

> I just thought school knowledge and actual experience were two completely different things. I saw them as two completely different things and I saw books as the law, and I was just a perfect little good student who went ...[when did that begin to change for you?] It started to end in a class I took in college, in undergraduate. The professor gave us a reading assignment in Indian history - the history of India. We read the book, which was short thankfully, and I was taking notes and I was studying this book and he came into class and he proceeded to tear the the book to shreds and that was like a revelation to me that a book could be wrong

I also probed Pam's reticence with respect to addressing schooling in its sociopolitical context. I suggested to her that perhaps it is no accident that schools function the way they do, and could it be that schools serve the interests of those with power, rather than the children they ostensibly serve. She responded:

> I would neve accuse politicans of - I guess I am still a little idealistic - I would never accuse them of even thinking about this issue. I would never accuse them of purposely trying to turnout soldiers [i.e., conformists]. It wouldn't have even crossed my mind that, to think that they were doing this [how about the leaders of the industrial apparatus?] the same. I wouldn't think it because ... it would be too diabolical.

We then addressed the issue of agency or empowerment once more. I pointed out how surprised I was, from my acquaintance with Pam, at the degree of apprehension she expressed in the interview about her ability to do what sbe feels ought to be done. Her response was revealing about the difficulties so many women face in our society:

> It is just weakness I see in myself, really, the weakness to... It's really tied to personal weakness I know [Why are you so willing to blame yourself?] I don't know [Is it your own past history that has led you to be this doubtful?] I think... I can catch fire and go great guns but I do often have doubts. I am not a quick thinker on my feet. I find I don't... I am always afraid I'll get found out as always being the dumb cluck [really?] yeah, honest [Does that feeling go back to your childhood or to some experience related to being a woman in our society?] If I

had been a man I would have been something completely different right now. If I had been one of my brothers I would be something different [what do you think you might have been?] I would be a powerful person. I would be in a profession [A mover and a shaker?] I would be a mover and a shaker, that's right, if I had been a male. [How do you feel making that statement now?] I have a lot of lost time that I have to catch up on I guess. [I then point out that if this were me, a male, I would be angry at those who had taken away my power. Pam responds...] I have never been able to do that. [You internalize it?] Absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely. There's a tremendous empowerment that just comes from being white male.

Finally, when asked how she felt as she looked forward to teaching [Q36], Pam replied:

I'm excited to get started and ... I look forward to keeping some connection alive [with the university]. I thought your idea of having a teacher [support] group as we go out into the world is just vital because I think too often we are going to be the ones bucking the system a little or a lot depending on the school, and I think that it's just too hard to do alone, sometimes, if one really has an interest in doing the kind of teaching one wants to do. I am generally optimistic.

Case study #3: Monica

Monica is an undergraduate student who will graduate at the end of Spring 1991 with a dual major in liberal arts and elementary education. The undergraduate program differs from the graduate program principally in that field-based assignments accompany most of the education classes in the undergraduate program, thus allowing students to have extensive field experience in schools prior to formal student teaching. Of the three students discussed in this paper, Monica is the only one whose journal was not written exclusively for me. Because much of Monica's journal addressed issues that were specific to the requirements of the courses she was taking, my perception of Monica's construction of epistemology and pedagogy was quite vague prior to interviewing her. My summary notes from her journal indicate that

empowerment was a recurrent concern for Monica. Reflecting on her tendency to please others Monica at one point raised the question: "What if I know something I do won't please a parent or the administration? How will I deal with it?" At another point she notes, "I feel very concerned about being correct - one of those people who won't give an answer unless I know it's right." Monica also wrestled with conflicts between the idealistic presentation of teaching in her college classes, and her own perceptions of the reality of schooling: "I agree that exploratory talk should be the standard for creating knowledge and becoming involved in what you learn, instead of a passive recipient...but idealistic is useless if you're not realistic.' Monica also shows some deep concern about the broader context of education. At one point, for instance, Monica, who is white, commented on how "pissed off [she feels] with fellow students who dismiss minority students as garbage." At another point Monica protests that the United States government "is demented. They spend all their money on weapons."

Monica began the interview by explaining that she cannot remember a time in her life when she did not want to be a teacher. Her primary motivation for teaching now is that she enjoys children's company so much: "They are so refreshing, and they are so interesting, and they are so innocent." When asked to describe a lesson she has recently taught [Q5] she described how she has been teaching during this current semester in her field assignment:

> Unfortunately a lot of the teaching I have been doing is out of the manual, and taking the lesson and asking them questions from the lesson and going through... The most recent thing I have been doing is teaching science lessons on plant adaptations and spreading seeds.[How did you decide what content to teach?] I had the manual and I had to cover that unit in a certain number of class periods. [When you say "had to" was that statement referring to pressure from the cooperating teacher, from the district or from your supervisor?] Some of it comes from I'm supposed to be teaching three lessons a week to a small group or the whole class according to my supervisor so first I did a unit on social studies, then I did the next unit on science. I think it had four lessons in it, so I had a certain amount of class periods to cover those four lessons, then I would review and test. [I probed to see if the requirement came from her university

supervisor or elsewhere] It's kind of hard. Well, it comes from... I think it's part of the school curriculum. I think they have to cover a certain amount of subjects and this is what Jane* (*pseudonym - cooperating teacher) gave me to do, and I feel the best way to get through the information in the amount of time I was given with the materials I was able to use, was to go through the textbook. [What would have happpened if you told Jane you had lots of good ideas and would love to teach it in a different way?] I think Jane gives me lots of leeway. I could do pretty much what I wanted as long as I was comfortable [so you do have choices?] ... but I still have to cover the material in the unit in a certain amount of time. I would love to do more experiments but some days... only having 20 minutes to cover four pages of information in the text that I had to get to them. I did do the first lesson... we went over the introduction ["went over" means... they all had their books out and read pieces?] Yeah, and we read it , and we stopped and asked questions, and I tried to give examples to try to make it a little more coherent beccause some of the children are ESL and I worry that they don't always get this so, when we got through the section I gave them some questions to answer and I said when you are done come up to me and we are going to do a small experiment, and when they were done we did an experiment with putting beans in a bag with water and we could see how the roots grow [that was extra to the book, right?] Right, that was outside the book, and that was at the end.

I then asked Monica to evaluate the success of the lessons. She replied:

Given the test I just gave, I am not so sure. [Before we get into the test, what is your general sense of your teaching here - do you feel good about it?] No, I hate teaching from - not hate - I just dislike teaching from the text because it is so abstract and these children, although they should be at a level to do it this way, they aren't at that level that they can learn at this abstract level, most of them don't even read on fourth grade level... so I wanted to read it out loud as a class because that's the only way some of them will get through it [and the test?] I would say a third to half failed it. [how many children in the class?] 23. [so what does that do to your thinking?] I don't know, it makes me... I think testing and the

> results of testing are a direct reflection of a teacher. I always thought that so it is really hard for me to say that they understood the material... [did you talk to Jane about these results yet?] No, but she's not going to be surprised because they fail her tests all the time.

When asked to describe her ideal lesson [Q6], Monica chose a language arts lesson that she had taught the previous semester based on the use of literature. She said that her goal had been to get away from the basal reader. The lesson revolved around a poem to do with planting. Seized with inspiration Monica brought in seeds and used them as a stimulus for creative writing. Here's how she describes her feeling as she evaluated the success of that lesson:

> I was working with the children in the class who were at the lowest level and I was so excited with the responses I got back from them. One girl was writing poems. First she just reiterated "Roses are red, violets are blue", then she wrote her own version of it which was really... I got such joy out of seeing such creativity that they got out of this. [where did you get the idea for this lesson? Did it come from a curriculum book?] No, that lesson was mine, that particular lesson was mine.

In responding to Q11 [overall purpose of education courses] Monica elaborated further on her own epistemological conception of teaching, and particularly on the struggle between the progressive methods her professors advocate and the traditional didactics she is encountering in schools:

> Teaching is so much your own personality... Out of all I've learned here the one thing I will take to the classroom is my own personality, that is what will stand out the most. It is very hard, I don't agree with the traditional style of teaching. Then again I was taught traditionally and here I am graduating from the university and I feel I am a well-adjusted individual. I don't feel that I have a schizophrenic side of me that will separate me because I was taught traditionally. [Monica then goes on to suggest that conservative students should be taught how to combine their leaning toward traditionalism with some progressive methodology, but we do not offfer this "happy medium" option. She continues...] Maybe my idea of traditional isn't your idea of traditional. I am now

> in a traditional style school where they have textbooks and they have teachers' manuals and they follow through and they go lesson by lesson. This is the style of teaching that not only is there but is mandated: "This is what you're going to do.".Let's take away that didactic school now and [replace it] with a transformation type school. What are you going to do? Are you going to burn the books? Are you going to burn all the teachers' manuals to get away from that traditional style of teaching/? There has to be... you still have to cover that material. That material still has to be there, and I think this still has to be there. [why?] Why, because why are your children in school? They are in school to learn how to be learners and to learn how to be a learner you have to learn something.

Monica then went on to explain that a fellow student confided in her that while the college faculty taught many interesting things, we never made it clear quite how to incorporate these into the existing curriculum. She quotes her friend: "I have the hardest time... I don't know how to cover everything I have to cover. I would love to do these things but I don't know how to fit them into the curriculum." Monica went on to point out that what the students are missing is "that this [the interesting pedagogical ideas offered in courses] isn't curriculum, this is enrichment. This is ways to make the curriculum more real." Further reinforcement for this epistemological stance was provided by Jane, her cooperating teacher. Jane had taken the same class in which Monica was currently enrolled, a few years earlier, with the same professor. Responding to my inquiry as to whether Jane might feel the same way as she herself does, Monica replied:

> She said she had been in Professor X's class and she said she loved the things Professor X did. "They were really great things. I really enjoyed the course, but if Professor X saw me teaching here she would drop dead". And she said "I don't have the materials, I don't have the time, and these students are undisciplined. They can't handle this kind of experience."
>
> Invited to assess the overall message offered by the School of Education [Q16], Monica took an opportunity to elaborate on how she handles the contradictions between the good ideas she hears in her courses and the demands of adapting to the

field experience. I asked her if she played a game out in the schools, or took a stand for her ideas:

> With your [field experience] supervisor you have to play a game. That's the nature of being supervised. They don't ask you to go out there and .... they ask you to go out there and give them a lesson that is going to please them. That's what our supervisors ask for and I really believe that we are all training dogs when it comes to things like this. It's like I said, if I want to get an 'A' on a paper, I can write to get an 'A' on a paper. [You can play that game?] I can play that game. I think the whole supervisor situation is a game. [What about the cooperating teacher - is that a game too?] No, that's where you get your most contradicting message because you learn all these great things at Hofstra and then you go out and there you have someone say to you "That's great, but it doesn't work". That's very difficult to deal with. I had my cooperating teacher say to me this semester "Are you sure you still want to be a teacher? Is it too late for you to change your mind?" [She is discouraged, and she was passing her discouragement on to you?] And if I hadn't had a positive experience in _____ [location of field placement previous semester], and if I wasn't so strong in my belief to want to be a teacher, I could have been swayed. Maybe I could have looked at this situation and said "Oh my goodness I cannot teach. This is unreal." So that causes a real problem.

Asked what came to mind when she thought of the term "elementary school curriculum" [Q20], Monica replied:

> Right now, teachers' manuals... they just stack up these huge books that I have to carry around and read, that's what comes to mind [what do you think of these as a form of curriculum?] Not to bash all manuals, I think they can be used in a positive form, they're just not.. people take them as guidelines for life... so I don't want to bash all manuals because I think they can be... if you have the initiative they can be helpful [Of what should the curriculum consist?] It should consist of the subjects, the general subjects that they cover now, but they should be organized in a way that is interesting for students, that is real for the students. [who should decide on curriculum?] I don't know. I have trouble with that

> question because there needs to be some kind of consensus on, you know, if you are going to teach addition in first grade and subtraction in second grade [should this consensus be at federal , statel, district, or school level, or perhaps among first-grade teachers in a school?] I don't know, I have some real difficulty with that question.... I think there should be maybe even some federal consensus that, just the general concepts you would teach, not how it should be taught, definitely not how it should be taught.

Referring to curricular integration [Q23}, Monica affirmed that integration was not only possible but necessary, and she expressed confidence that integration could be accomplished while using the standard curriculum packages.

Monica's responses to the dilemmas presented in Q25 were also revealing of the epistemological struggles she is going through. Some brief examples will be presented. Responding to Q25A ["cover" the curriculum and build on student interest], Monica aserted that you can accomplish both, though she was not "exactly sure how it can be done." Her response to Q25E offered some more insight into her perspective on the role of testing and evaluation in schools. Defending her belief in the value of periodic tests of the kind she described earlier, Monica argued:

> I don't know how I would count them but I think tests give you some insight into what they are actually getting and I think it is a way to evaluate myself. You know, I taught this unit to them and this is what I think they got and this is what they actually got and maybe the next time teaching it.. [you define learning in term of "getting"?] What is the point of teaching them any material if they are not going to... that [= "get"] is another word that has been labeled.. What's the point of going over something with them if they are not learning, if they ar not taking it in, or if they are not getting anything from it?

The issue of prepackaged curricula was raised again [Q25E] and Monica framed her dilemma as follows: "That is a tou gh question... What are my requirements as a teacher? What does the school, the principal, or the government expect my students to leave my class with and what am I sending them on to the next grade with?" Regarding the issue of a happy medium between traditional and transformative teaching [Q25J], Monica resolved the issue as follows:

> I think there needs to be some kind of happy medium but I don't think i t has to be in the middle. I think it would be in different places for different people. For me, I think it is going to be on the open side but I am sure that I am going to do some things that are very traditional just because that is the way, for a while.

With respect to the issue of schooling as a promoter either of transformation or conformity [Q25M], Monica had very clear views:

> I think we should be teaching them how to use their own voices and to know what they say is important, and then I think when they take that information and that confidence in themselves and their confidence in being able to do what they set out to do, they're going to find their place. I don't think we should educate people to fit in anywhere.... I cannot with any good conscience be able to sleep tonight and go into my classroom to prepare my students to expect... to wake up in the morning and look at myself positively in the mirror saying that I am only working to make my students conform to one particular kind of role. I can't, that is not right, that is not reality.

When we began to explore the issue of empowerment [Q26] Monica indicated that she was unfamiliar with this term. Monica expressed a strong commitment to make a difference in children's lives, and if there was pressure on her she said that she would resist even if it meant putting her job in jeopardy: "I think I would have to do what I felt was best even if at the end of the year I might have to face the consequences if they did not invite me back... I don't know how I coudl live with myself if I just played the game... I think I would have trouble going to school just to play the game." On the other hand, Monica is pragamtic, and she could see herself temporarily playing the game when her principal or district evaluator came to evaluate her performance, as her response to Q28 revealed:

> When they are coming to evaluate you you play the game for that one twenty five minute period [I sense an interesting balance here. On the one hand you say "I don't play the game. I'm an outspoken individual who speaks my mind." But, on the other hand, for certain purposes, you recognize that you might play games?]. I might. I don't think I will entirely conform to a traditional style of teaching just to make an evaluator happy, and I think I may be more apt to try to

prove that they are wrong, that I can do things my way and still be successful.

Later, at Q30 [situations in which she might take a stand] Monica elaborated further:

> A relevant example for me is what the [cooperating teacher's] principal said about, you know, "I don't want to see these extra things. I just want you to cover the curriculum." I think I would stand up right then and there and say this is the curriculum. This is learning. But, on a matter like that, I think definitely I would be very outspoken and say I don't agree with you.

Monica also pointed out a lack of consistency in messages about empowerment in the university, noting particularly that the message from university field experience supervisors was: "You know you have to do that because you are there and that is the teacher's style and you have... ["fit in" is the message?] definitely."

Monica informed me that multiculturalism had been discussed in one of her classes, and that she regarded it as of incredible importance in promoting mutual understanding among diverse groups. She also agreed that education ought to be explicitly anti-racist, though she was hesitant about how one might go about doing this in an all-white community such as the one in which she had had an earlier field placement:

> I think it depends on how you brought it into the curriculum. It is very hard in an all-white school to talk about racism You know in _____ the only Black people they saw were on television... I think it needs to be in all curriculum but you don't necessarily have to call it, you don't have to label it.

Monica rejects the notion that multiculturalism should serve to promote any kind of common identity, instead arguing that "you want children to become more tolerant and more accepting of other people and other ideas and customs."

In following up on specific themes from Monica's journal I began by raising her persistent discussions of anxiety and of her tendency to feel obligated to please others. Monica dismissed part of it as normal undergraduate student anxiety, and pointed out that part of it could be explained by the way some of the School of Education's requirements, particularly the expectations of field supervisors, were structured so as to force students into pleasing others:

> I am being asked to be put in a situation where I have to please somebody else.

> That is what my professors have said they want. That is what my supervisors say they want. [so that's a fault in our program?] Maybe... maybe it's me. Maybe I should say, "No I don't just want to sit here and please you. I am going to do what I think is most important", and maybe if I did that... And sometimes I did try to do that. I know I did that with my last lesson and I felt that my supervisor would think that this was great. I thought she was going to love this lesson. I loved this lesson and she said it was terrible. [Does it matter if she loves it?] No, because I don't have a lot of respect for them, honestly. So then again I do have a problem because I want good grades because I think my grades are somewhat of a reflection of me and I know I try hard and I feel like maybe I do my best, so that is a problem for me.

I also explored Monica's feelings about the oppression of minority students, as reflected in many journal comments. Monica, who had previously been placed in a very positive educational environment in a white middle-class suburb, was currently placed in an all-Black school that was characterized by regimentation, authoritarianism and alienation. This served to reinforce her feeling of outrage:

> I mean this is no secret. Somebody knows this is going on on Long Island... in one of the wealthiest counties in the U.S. But this is going on only because these children are minorities. It is totally frustrating. This would not happen in _____ [previous placement]. That drives me crazy. That makes me so mad that they are allowing this to happen.

I then asked Monica to expand further on her disquiet in the presence of idealism not anchored in reality. She replied:

> It is nice to say we should all live in a peaceful world and there should be no wars, but is this realistic? How are we going to get to this? Idealism is only good if you have a way to get there... I think you need to have ideals and you need to see idealistic points of view, but you also have to say "I need a way to get there."

Finally, Monica responded to Q36 [feelings right now as you look forward] as follows:

> I am a little scared. Actually I am a lot scared... a little nervous about my inability to go in there and actually do all these things but I am excited. I am very excited that I am actually going to get out there, working with students, now that I enjoy it

so much. I get such pleasure out of being in a classroom.

Conclusion

Interviewing students is a humbling experience. It is clear even from the brief extracts presented here that student teachers' conceptions of epistemology, agency and pedagogy are much more complex than technical terms such as "empowered", "child-centered", "didactic", "progressive", "reproductive", "transformative" and so on would imply. Having listened to the students' narratives I am no longer willing to think of "teacher beliefs" as uniform ideological entities, nor am I willing to posit simple linear relationships between beliefs about teaching and the practice of teaching. Student teachers struggle with their own histories and autobiographies; they struggle with the ideal conceptions of pedagogy presented in their courses; they struggle either to adapt to or resist the powerful socialization pressures that are intrinsic to their relationships with cooperating teachers; they struggle with transformation in an educational system locked into reproduction; and most of all they struggle to reconstruct their own autobiographical and professional identities under all of these competing pressures and expectations.

No more than there is a generic professor, there is no generic student teacher and there is no generic student teaching site. All of the struggles take place in local contexts in which students' epistemological understandings intersect with the epistemological messages provided by the academic and field program. If we are to reconceptualize teacher education we need to ask ourselves what we want progressive teachers to be; we need to listen closely to the socially and historically constituted conceptions of epistemology, agency and pedagogy our students use to view themselves and the world; and we need to look closely at whether the field experiences and academic courses we provide enable students to develop a vision of prgressive pedagogy and a sense of empowerment so that they may be able to make

the space to enact this vision in their future professional lives. While it is clearly premature to draw conclusions from this research, my prediction is that when the picture is more complete it will call into question the eclectic, cafeteria-style teacher educaiton that appears to be the norm. If our students are not generic, perhaps generic teacher education, however impressive its "knowledge base" is not up to the task of educating teachers as change agents. The conclusion that I wrote at the end of my other AERA paper seems appropriate here too:

> There are no simple answers to these questions. Posing them serves to underline the need for any progressive theory of pedagogy to be self-reflexive about the inherently contradictory nature of pedagogy. It also serves to highlight the fact that teaching is neither value-free nor a merely technical task. We do a great injustice to teachers by assuming that if we can equip them with a single ideology they will be able to become effective agents of progressive reform in schools. We owe it to our teachers to gain a deeper understanding of the role of ideology and contradiction in pedagogy so that we might begin to enable our teachers to view the social and political relations of pedagogy as problematic so that they too may begin to ask these questions and to provide answers for themselves (O'Loughlin, 1991b, p.32).

References

Berlak, A. & Berlak, H. (1981). Dilemmas of schooling: Teaching and social change. New York: Methuen.

Billig, M., Condor, S., Edwards, N., Gane, M., Middelton, D. & Radley, A. (1988). Ideological dilemmas: A social psychology of everyday thinking. London: Sage.

Delpit, L. (1986). Skills and other dilemmas of a progressive Black educator. Harvard Educational Review, 56, 379-385.

Delpit, L. (1988). The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other people's children. Harvard Educational Review, 58, 280-298.

Ginsburg, M. (1988). Contradictions in teacher education and society. Philadelphia, PA: Falmer Press.

Kuhn, D., Amsel. E. & O'Loughlin, M. (1988). The development of scientific thinking skills. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Lyons, N. (1990). Dilemmas of knowing: Ethical and epistemological dimensions of teachers work and development. Harvard Educational Review, 60, 159-180.

NAEYC (1988, January). NAEYC Position statement on developmentally appropriate practice in the primary grades, serving 5- through 8-year olds. Young children. pp. 64-84.

O'Loughlin, M. (1991a). Inquiring into the epistemologies underlying student teachers' beliefs. Manuscript submitted for publication.

O'Loughlin, M. (1991b, April). Beyond constructivism: Toward a dialectical model of the problematics of teacher socialization. Paper presented at the Annual Meeeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.